DECLASSIFIED

In reply refer to
NEA

RECEIVED
83/--3

October 2 3 1956

M/R
Central
Files

SECRET

Dear Mr. Gray:

I understand that the Department of Defense desires the views of this Department regarding military aid programs for Libya in connection with budget planning for fiscal years 1958 and 1959.

You will recall that at the time of Ambassador Tappin's return to the United States in March 1956, he was authorized to commit the United States Government to a program of equipping one thousand Libyan soldiers. The Ambassador subsequently made this commitment to the Libyan Government and a military survey team then visited Libya for the purpose of making specific recommendations for the implementation of the commitment. The justification for the commitment, as contained in our agreed position paper of March 13, 1956, is still valid. The maintenance in Libya of a strong, Western-oriented central government is essential to the protection of the substantial United States investment in Wheelus Air Force Base and important to the promotion of stability in North Africa and the Near East. Even this small addition to its army will enhance the prestige of the Libyan Government and increase its capacity to maintain internal order and resist local aggression. Without such assistance from the United States, there is danger that Libya might turn to Egypt for military aid. This would constitute a serious set-back to Western interests.

This Department has been informed by officials of the Department of Defense that not less than $1,700,000 will be required during fiscal year 1957 to meet this commitment. It is the view of this Department that for fiscal years 1958 and 1959 the Department of Defense should plan on programs of not less than $1,000,000 and $2,000,000, respectively, to implement the commitment and to assure the attainment of the foregoing United States objectives.

In this

The Honorable
Gordon Gray,
Assistant Secretary of Defense.

SECRET

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CRP/HR
REVIEWED BY J. M. Razi DATE May 6, 1982
RDS for
TS AUTH.
DECL.
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

DECLASSIFIED

SECRET

In this connection it is recalled that our agreed position paper of March 13, 1956 stated that "the extent to which the United States should participate in or take over this function (of training) will have to be worked out." Moreover, officials of the Department of Defense were informed several weeks ago that the British Government had requested the United States Government to consider the possibility of United States aid in the establishment of a modest Libyan air force, consisting of perhaps one squadron of conventional aircraft, with personnel for training. The officials of the Department of Defense were also informed that this Department had given the British no encouragement in this regard, but had indicated that consideration might be given to the possibility of training some of the one thousand men under our existing commitment as airborne troops. The officials of the Department of Defense indicated that this proposition would be considered simultaneously with the report of the military survey team which went to Libya. The question of United States aid in establishing a Libyan air force was raised again with the Secretary of State by Mr. Selwyn Lloyd on October 7. On this occasion it was indicated that President Nasser of Egypt had offered six aircraft to the Libyan Prime Minister. It was also indicated that the British Government simply does not have the resources to devote to a Libyan air force and that for this reason the matter was being mentioned to the United States.

The two subjects in the preceding paragraph are raised as having a potential bearing on program planning for the fiscal years 1958 and 1959 and should be given urgent consideration by our Departments.

Sincerely yours,

William M. Rountree
Assistant Secretary

S/S-CR
OCT 22 1956 P.M.
OCT 23 1956 A.M.
OCT 23 1956 P.M.

NEA:AF/N:LGCyr:prc
12/15/56

E:OFD:EO
SECRET

U/MSA

NEA - Mr. Stevens

DECLASSIFIED